

England. — Churches, &c. — Bapt 3/3. — Kent and
Sussex Association of Particular Baptist Churches
Elders, Ministers and Messengers,

OF THE SEVERAL

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

Meeting at *Ashford, Sandhurst, Smarden, Tenterden, Folkstone,*
in KENT; *Battle, Rotherfield, Rye, Wivelsfield, Lewes,*
and *Brightelmstone,* in SUSSEX.

Maintaining the important Doctrines of Three equal Persons in the Divine Essence—Eternal and Personal Election to Holiness here, and Eternal Life hereafter—The original Guilt and Depravity of Mankind—Particular Redemption—Free Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Christ alone—Efficacious Grace in Regeneration—The Perseverance of the Saints to Glory—Professing likewise Water Baptism upon a Personal Confession of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the primitive Mode and Discipline of the Christian Church.

Assembled at LEWES, the 3d and 4th Days of JUNE, 1788.

To the several Churches they represent, send Christian Salutation.

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

WE once more, with great affection, address you, as those that are near to us in the bonds of the gospel; your prosperity for time and eternity is what we earnestly desire; and, to advance which, we would spare no pains, nor leave any means untried: We wish your perfection in all the will of God, that you may abound in grace, gifts and good works. Believe us brethren, that in our annual meetings, our hearts are sincerely and warmly engaged for you at the throne of grace, that you may increase with all the increase of God, be filled with his glorious fulness and rooted and grounded in love.

We are heartily glad to hear of your welfare, and do rejoice in your steadfastness in the true faith wherein you stand, and your firm and zealous adherence to the glorious doctrines of everlasting sovereignty, and free love and grace in this day of error and blasphemy, when so many are carried about and tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; unstable souls! ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth. We lament that iniquity so rapidly abounds: that the love of many waxes cold. Brethren, it is a time for prayer to God for help, which we earnestly recommend to you, and also a particular care for and watching over the souls of your families, instructing them by every means and in all wisdom, into the doctrines of the gospel, giving them the most

most plain and convincing reasons from the word of God, for your faith, hope and practice. This seems to be much neglected by many, for which omission they are very culpable, and often, as the reward of such conduct, they are attended with painful and soul-distressing consequences. We are sensibly affected with sorrow and grief at the state of many professors in our day, who once seemed to run well, but are now hindered, being entangled with the evil of this present world, at ease in Zion, contented with a name to live and the externals of religion, or wandering in the barren fields of speculation, or warmly contending about some intricate and abstruse points in divinity, whilst private and even family prayer is not regarded and attended to. Reading the word of God, self-examination, religious and experimental conversation are much neglected; internal godliness, fellowship and communion with God, seem to be little enjoyed and sought after, whilst pride, haughtiness of heart, a censorious unforgiving spirit, with lightness, levity, vanity of mind and conversation much prevails, and spread their baneful influences around; all which we would wish to guard you against, and warn you of the consequence, as being very dishonouring to God, extremely hurtful to your souls and the interest and honour of Christ.—Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, stand fast, in one spirit, in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and whilst many are saying, Who will shew us any good? Let it be your fervent desire to know more of Christ, and to have fellowship with him; be ever looking to him for all you need; consider what he endured and suffered for you; what he is made of God unto you; what he is doing, and hath promised to do for you as his spouse and beloved. Surely in Emanuel there is fullness and treasure sufficient to satisfy the utmost wishes and desires of an immortal mind; live upon him then as your all in all, and ever remember by Christ strengthening of you, you can do all things, but without him can do nothing; be very careful not to give the children of darkness any just occasion to speak evil of the good ways of God, or blaspheme the holy name whereby you are called; be always punctual and faithful to your word and promise; fulfil all your engagements with honesty and fidelity; defraud no man; and beware of falsehood and extortion in your business, and in whatever station in life Divine Providence has placed you: learn to be content and thankful, and manifest you are a servant of God, and that Heaven is your home; consider the high and honourable character you sustain; a friend, an heir, yea, a son of God; debase it not by any means, but live up to your calling and privilege; and whilst, upon the one hand, we wish to guard you against idleness and slothfulness, so would we wish upon the other, to warn you of worldly-mindedness and covetousness, as being both alike inconsistent with the name whereby you are called.

We think it meet thus to stir up your minds, by putting you in remembrance, and as our former addresses have been received by you in love, and have proved, we hope, by the blessing of God, profitable to your souls, we again earnestly request you duly to consider the important matter which we, in great affection, recommend to your attention in this epistle; the subject is connected with our last years address, which was the plan of a Christian church; we would wish to engage your attention this year, to the duties of its officers and members, which we shall endeavour briefly to explain, and enforce with suitable motives.

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The Church of Christ, *strictly* speaking, consists of all the Elect, who were given to him before time began, by the Father, and over whom Jesus is the only Head and Sovereign Lord. [a]

But, more *generally*, a company of the faithful meeting together in one place, to worship God, and administer ordinances agreeable to his revealed will, are a church of Christ, separated thus *visibly* from the world, to shew forth his praise. [b]

It is to be observed, there may, and often is, in this visible church, persons whose hearts are not right with God—they are not all Israel who are of Israel:—there may be a profession of religion without a possession of grace;—tares are permitted to grow, and will be found amongst the wheat;—hypocrites will by some means steal into the church, and be planted there by men who are not divinely planted there by Christ; these, at best, are barren trees, and cumberers of the ground, whose end and portion will be dreadful.

To every unprejudiced mind it will appear, that God's word makes no mention of *National Churches*—these lively oracles describe the church of Christ as consisting of distinct assemblies [c] totally independent of all human authority, whether of the Magistrate as *civil governor*, or of *each other* as distinct churches, the only master is Christ, who bought his people with his own blood, and over whom, he, and only he, is King and Lawgiver [d]; and therefore all doctrines, commands, and ordinances, which are planned by men, however seemly and convenient they may appear, are to be rejected; and those only which he taught and has enjoined are to be strictly attended to, without any addition or amendment whatsoever; and to this they are bound by his authority. In these Churches moreover, there is to be no superiority or lordly power exercised upon any pretence, at any time by the *members over each other*, for they are all equally near and dear to their Sovereign; they have one father, and are one in Christ Jesus, whether bond or free, rich or poor.

All the *Officers* in the Church of Christ are of his own appointment, who have their qualifications and commission from him; but this does not raise them to be Lords and Masters over God's heritage, but on the contrary to be servants of all for his sake. It is true they are to be esteemed highly; but be it remembered, that it is for their works sake, and for the sake of him, whose they are and whom they serve.—They are chosen and called to the work by an act of the people; amongst whom they previously stand as members.

The PASTORS (whom we would first describe) are under-shepherds to the flock of Christ, himself being the great shepherd of the sheep. They are first to be tried, and then if approved by the people, to receive a call or invitation from them, and after accepting the same are ordained or set apart to be over them in the Lord, they are to take the oversight of them with a willing, and ready mind, not for filthy lucre's sake; and to feed them in the fear of the Lord, with divine knowledge and understanding, they should have an experimental knowledge and acquaintance with Christ, an internal call by the Spirit of God to the work, love to Christ, and the souls of men—an earnest desire for their happiness and Salvation—a thorough knowledge of the gospel—an aptness to teach—zeal for

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God?

[a] John xvii. 2. Eps. i. 4. Col. i. 18. [b] John xviii. 36. Col. iv. 15; 11. Corth. vi. 17. 1. Corth. i. 2, 14, 25. Rev. ii. 17. [c] Gal. i. 22. Acts viii. 1, 19. Acts i. 9, 31. Rev. i. 11. Rom. xvi. 5. [d] Math. xxiii. 9. Acts xi. 28. Jam. iv. 12.

God's honour and Glory—a holy life and conversation—humility of mind—and soundness of judgment and in the faith.

Their duty is not only to preach the Gospel in season and out of season, but to administer the ordinances of Christ as Stewards of his house, to take the lead in Divine Worship and Church Meetings—directing and counselling in all acts of discipline, passing censure as may be necessary by the agreement of the Church, and in their name to receive or reject those who may offer themselves for members—to excommunicate any that fall into errors or walk disorderly, after proper means have been used and proved ineffectual with them; but this is not by pains or penalties, but a disowning them as Members, a depriving them of the privileges of the Church of God—such persons are not to be received into fellowship again, untill a full proof is given of their repentance for their former conduct, and it is manifested they are forgiven and received by the Lord.

They are to pray with and for the people, to watch over them in love with patience, tenderness and faithfulness, lest any should by any means subvert them from the simplicity of the Gospel; it is their duty to inspect into the state of their minds—progress, knowledge and experience of divine things, the truths they deliver, and as occasion may offer and cases require, advise, comfort, warn, or reprove; and by the whole strive to promote the Glory of Christ, their Soundness in Faith, Growth in Grace, and Eternal Salvation.

The various appellations given them in God's word, and the work they are called unto manifest it to be a necessary, useful and important office; that such who are thus exercised by the Lord are engaged in a good employment; are highly honoured thereby, and it is great Grace that thus is given to them—their reward is from and with God; but it is to be remembered, the work is exceeding weighty and laborious, and requires great fortitude, wisdom and grace, properly to execute the same.

There may and often is for a season, a Minister with a people who has been regularly called by some Church to preach and baptize upon approbation for the Pastoral Office; but it is their indispensable duty as soon as circumstances will permit, to have a settled pastor, ordained over them, that they may enjoy all the ordinances of the Gospel.

2dly. The Office and Work of *Deacons*.—These also receive their call—are chosen, and appointed by the people. As to their number we have no certain rule, but every Church should be directed in wisdom according to the number of their Members to have as many as are sufficient for their Work, and more are useless and unnecessary.

These must be men of good report, endued with wisdom and the Holy Ghost, grave, solid, and sincere, not double tongued, nor covetous, persons holding the faith in a pure conscience; and tho' not called by office to preach or administer the ordinances, yet are to be assisting to the Pastor, and in the care of the people, to watch over them with diligence, to exhort and counsel as necessity may require, and opportunity offer to strive by all means for peace, to make reconciliation should their be a difference, or any thing contrary to love amongst the Members, that the peace and tranquillity of the Church may not thereby be disturbed; they are to study the welfare, unity, prosperity and happiness of the whole body, as God is the God of Order, and not of Confusion, to see that all things appertaining to his Church and Worship are done in decency and in order: it is their place if occasion requires to stir up their people to their duty, in attending on the means of Grace, in filling up their
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places constantly at the Lord's table ; to a free and liberal communication for the support of the Gospel, that they may thereby be enabled to make a proper and suitable provision for the Lord's table, the Pastors, and the Poor—all which services should be executed with sincerity, cheerfulness, and diligence, as knowing whose they are and whom they serve, that those who use this office well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus,

3dly. As the Pastors and Deacons have much labour and care incumbent on them for the good of the people, as we have shewn ; so likewise there is a work and a part equally useful and binding on every *Member*. Without it is conscientiously regarded and practised by them, the former may labour in vain, which duty we will now endeavour briefly to shew.

1st. As it respects your *Pastor*.—Love and Esteem is highly incumbent on you, to him and for him, and an affectionate and hearty concern for his welfare and happiness, whether it respects his person, character, or family ; you are to behave friendly, and to be acquainted with him, to make your cases and difficulties known ; to obey and submit yourselves to him in and for the Lord, Heb. xiii, 17. To pray for his health of Soul and Body, Comfort and Success ; for remember, he needs your prayers—you are not to receive an accusation against him without certain and sufficient evidence—to be upon your guard against the evil surmises and suspicions of any disaffected persons, and if possible stop them—to take special care also as much of your own comfort and Soul, prosperity depends upon it, that prejudice against him upon any account does not gain the ascendancy in your minds. You are to duly attend on his Ministry—to take heed you do not hurt his mind and grieve him by absenting yourselves unlawfully, or on the most trivial circumstance from the stated means of Grace ; or by a needless curiosity and itching ears frequenting other places to hear. According as God has blessed you in providence you are to subscribe towards his support ; and this observe, is not to be as an act of your benevolence, but what is his just right and your indispensable duty, as knowing the labourer is worthy of his hire.

To enforce these things on your minds, that they may be remembered and practised by you, reflect seriously on the following Observations :—Does it not naturally imply that those that watch for your soul's good, and labour in word and doctrine amongst you, ought to be very highly esteemed for their work sake ? think of their many cares, fears, prayers, and tears for you, your welfare and prosperity ; what peculiar trials and temptations they are exercised with, snares on every hand beset them, they are the butt as it were of Satan's malice, and the worldings scorn. What do they forego and undergo often for your sakes and the Gospel's ? They study by every way and means to do you service, and as they spend their time and strength for your present and eternal welfare, sure they ought, yea, they must, lay very near your heart, and for whom you have abundant cause to bless God. Consider the relation they stand in to you, and are they not in some sense the men of your choice, and given to you as an answer to prayer ; and have you not received from God by their Ministry, unspeakable blessings ? consider the lands now in darkness, and in how few places comparatively the pure gospel is now preached, and contrast it with your privileges ; consider the jealousy of God for his Ministers, how they are received and used by the people. Reflect on the use and benefit of a Gospel Ministry still to you, your family, the church,
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and the world in ignorance and blindness, and then say, Brethren, whether it is not highly incumbent on you to shew them due respect, as the servants and ministers of the Lord Jesus, and acknowledge them as such, and by every act of kindness manifest your regard for them, by sympathising with them in afflictions, encouraging and strengthening their hands against all oppositions, and striving with them for the spread of the gospel and the glory of God.

Secondly, As it relates to your duty and conduct to the *Deacons*, you are to respect and own them as officers in the church of Christ, to supply them as far as in your power with what is necessary, that they may fulfil and discharge the important trust committed to them with pleasure, honour, and satisfaction; they should be always consulted and applied unto in every case and circumstance that belongs to the church for advice and direction, and also in difficulties that you may be exercised with respecting your mind, estate or families; you are to pray for them that they may be supported, preserved, and enabled to discharge their office, and all that appertains unto it, with acceptance and success.

Thirdly, The duty of each member to the *Church*, to which by God's grace and providence he is joined, and by his own act and deed has given up himself.

First, LOVE, which is the bond of perfectness and the closest tie, without which, profession of love to God and our religion is vain.

What motives may we not set before and press on you, in a gospel spirit for you from the same principle, to let it abound; a few shall suffice.

It is the command of your master Jesus, who has positively enjoined it on all his followers, and set you the example even unto death, John iii. 16, it is the criterion of your discipleship, and whereby you are to be known amongst men, and shews you are not of the world or the wicked one, as Cain who slew his brother. Consider the love of God and of Christ to you, and is it not the same to and for them? Are not your privileges the same? Are you not brethren in Christ, and have all one Father? Is not the same rest, glory and happiness, in reversion for you all? Does not the exercise of it give a sensible degree of happiness? Mark the person who is under the influence and power of a bad temper, a churlish and morose disposition, (and it is to be lamented, and to their shame be it spoken, this is the case of some of God's own people, sometimes for a season) you may evidently see the reward of such in their own bosoms; it is love as well as holiness that distinguishes the elect from fallen angels, and so their state in consequence, the one of joy and happiness, and the other of misery and torment. This love is supernaturally wrought in the heart by the spirit of God, and in its exercise is to be fervent, unfeigned, and universal to all the saints; it suffers long and is kind, envieth not, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things, 1. Cor. xiii. 4. 5. 7. Brethren thus live, and you will once more force the wicked world to say, see how these Christians love.

Secondly, UNITY is another duty by all means to be maintained, viz. a unity of heart, of faith, judgment, doctrine and worship; if therefore there is any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the spirit or bowels of compassion and mercy in God, fulfil ye our joy, that ye be like minded and of one accord; let nothing be done through
strife

strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind esteem each other better than themselves, Phil. iii. 1. 2. 3. A house divided against itself, cannot, says Jesus, stand. To excite you to this duty, consider your eternal and vital union to Christ, and its indissoluble nature. As you are therefore members of his mystical body, of his flesh and of his bones, Eph. v. 30. How unnatural are schisms or discord in the same, as every member (however weak or uncomely as to us they may appear) are useful, necessary and ornamental, 1. Cor. xii. 12 to 25th v. How earnest was Christ and his Apostles in their prayers and precepts to injoin, inculcate, and maintain this. Reflect on the dishonour and ingratitude to Christ any thing contrary to this duty must be; what shame in the end will be entailed on yourselves, and sorrow and distress to the saints of God. Discord is only fit (if we may so speak) for the children and region of darkness; but very unseemly for the sons of God, and the dispensation of peace; this is an evil attended with many and great aggravations, and the persons guilty, or aiding and abetting others in it, may expect to be severely chastised by Christ, whose glory and interest are thus slighted and disregarded, and as far as in their power lies, by such conduct, the destruction of the churches. Such persons, who from pride, self will, self-interest, or any other motive, would by any means seek, or cause divisions or strife, are to be marked, and proper measures taken with them, to prevent their evil designs, that peace, unity and concord, may continue and abound.

Thirdly, To PRAY for each other, that they may stand fast in the truth and enjoy prosperity of every kind; and for an increase in grace, gifts and number, what exhortations and precepts to this end do we find in the word of God? what encouragement from the promises, and success on many occasions in this way by the saints of old; "Our Father, &c." is what our blessed Lord directed us to say when we pray, to remind us of this duty. Brethren, if you wish to be happy, prosperous and peaceable, pray without ceasing, God has declared, "I will be enquired of to do these things for the house of Israel," and promises you shall not seek in vain. If you love the brethren and Jerusalem at large, you will pray for her, and whilst you are so doing, you have a promise for much good to yourselves; and observe, it is what the poorest member may bestow, and the richest have no right or power to refuse.

Fourthly, Mutually to *bear with each others infirmities and weakness.*—The strong to support the weak, and not to please themselves, entertain a forgiving temper and disposition, making the greatest allowance, and putting the best constructions on the words and actions of the brethren, consistent with truth and faithfulness to each others souls, we would say in the language of the poet,

- "For every trifle scorn to take offence,
- "That always shews great pride, or little sense;
- "Good nature and good sense must always join,
- "To err is human, to forgive divine."

To this end, consider the patience and forbearance of God to you, his marvellous and undeserved kindness and mercy; how complicated and aggravating are your manifold crimes; how ungrateful you often behave to the best of friends; but all is freely forgiven, and not to be remembered against you any more. Reflect also on the command as well as example of Christ, your own weakness, and that by grace you stand;

And how unfit a revengeful, unforgiving temper and frame of mind is, to pray unto, or to have fellowship with a God of mercy, pity, and grace; and then say, Brethren, as you live by mercy and hope for mercy, whether it does not behove you to be merciful and compassionate to all?

Fifthly, A tender and affectionate concern for each others' prosperity in the things of this life, helping and encouraging each other in this respect as much as possible; also in the several states, troubles and afflictions, that divine providence may please to exercise them with, 1. Cor. xii. 26. or in any trouble of soul; to advise, comfort and sympathise with them, to relate your own experience and knowledge of God's goodness and mercy; the support and deliverance you found, the usefulness and benefit it has been to you, and also the power, faithfulness, love and pity of their covenant God and Father, for shall we, my Brethren, as those in the prophet Amos's time, drink wine in bowls, and forget those in great sorrow and affliction? no, let us rather weep with them that weep, and be grieved for the afflictions of Joseph. Christ in this also has set us an example, who, in all his people's afflictions is afflicted, and as their faithful and tender high priest is sensibly touched with the feeling of their infirmities, Heb. iv. 15. this is a character he will own in the great day, Matt. xxv. 36. and let us remind you for their negligence in this duty and conduct, the reverse, many find to their sorrow that God marks the same, and in this way the measure they have given is amply repaid, to convince them of their unkindness to their afflicted and distressed brethren, which ought to be and really is a caution and warning to us all.

6thly. A free and liberal impartation of your good things according to your ability to the poor of Christ's flock, who may be and often are in great distress and necessity—to seek them out and enquire after them and into their circumstances, and not wait to be informed and asked for your help, as well knowing these, tho' much in want, are generally the last to make their troubles known to man.

He that shutteth his bowels of compassion against such, and says, in words only, be warmed, fed, and clothed, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?

You are Stewards of God—and how you use, abuse, or misimprove his talents, must be accounted for another day. It is more blessed to give than to receive—he that soweth sparingly, consequently shall reap the same—he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord. This is his command, and what his Ministers are to charge you to obey—with such sacrifices the Lord is well pleased.—A cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall not lose it's reward; for as much as you have done it unto the least of my brethren, says Christ, I will own it as if it was done unto me.

7thly. Frequent Spiritual Conversation and conference for mutual edification and comfort. This is one valuable end, benefit and advantage of Church Fellowship, tho' much neglected by many;—the nearer we live to God in Prayer, Faith and Divine Communion, the more spiritual and heavenly minded are our Souls, the more will this be prized, practiced, and esteemed a privilege, as finding the advantage of it to ourselves and others; to this we are called to help each other forward in our journey after a godly sort, and to exhort one another to Love and Good Works. Them that fear the Lord are said to speak often one to another, and

and the Lord attends, hearkens, and is well pleased, and a book of remembrance is written before him for those that thus think on his name.

8thly, A *separation from ungodly* and erroneous persons as far and as much as possible, consistent with your lawful commerce, connections and correspondence with them in things of this life, knowing they are very ensnaring, hurtful and defiling. Evil communications corrupt good manners; what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? wherefore come out from amongst them and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and Brethren, as we have often seen the evil and bad effects of intermarriages with unconverted persons, by God's people, we would in love and affection warn you of the danger and harm you may, and do expose yourselves to, if you are not upon your guard, and guided herein by God and his word, which expressly commands you to marry only in the Lord, 1 Cor. vii. 39. and not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

9thly, Earnestly and mutually to *contend in love* with meekness, by all lawful means, for the faith, as once delivered to the saints; and this, as it has a respect to doctrine, to the ordinances, the liberty and privileges of the church of God, heartily joining to oppose and withstand all adversaries and enemies; and this, in no respect with carnal weapons, but with those of a spiritual nature which are and will be mighty through God; and also knowing whose cause you are engaged in, whose interest and honour you seek and contend for, *his*, who is Lord of all.

10thly, Cheerfully and with a willing mind, *undergoing the lot and portion of the saints of God*, whether prosperous or adverse, and with a firm resolution in the strength of Christ and his grace, not to draw back, or be offended upon any occasion whatsoever.

11thly, A conscientious regard unto, and a steady *attendance on all the appointed means of grace*, and meetings for the churches business! to encourage and strengthen each others hands, and glorify God.

12thly, A *watching over each other in love*, with mercy and faithfulness, out of a true sense of the glory of God, the honour of religion, and an affectionate and hearty concern for each others safety and prosperity; for in this way, and by it, we manifest a regard to the obligations we laid ourselves under when united to the people of God. And here, Brethren, we would give you a caution, be very careful you abuse not your liberty, lest you wound a weak brother, or lay a stumbling block or cause of offence in his way, which will be displeasing to God, and prove in the end hurtful to yourselves.

13th, and Lastly, *A godly walk and conversation*, having a conscience void of just offence to God and man in doing good to, and living peaceably with all, abstaining from the appearance of evil, and hating the garments spotted with the flesh, recommending by your lives the gospel which you hear and profess, may you be as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; consider, you have many eyes upon you, and certainly much is expected from you, and what bad effects may proceed from, and attend as the consequence, a conduct contrary to your profession. Therefore, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of a good report, if there be any virtue or praise, think on these things. Much more, and many other things might justly have been

added, but these for the present shall suffice, and surely, Brethren, what is herein contained, is certainly worthy of your notice and special regard; that if in any of these duties you have been remiss, you may be stirred up to activity; or have acted in any sense a part unworthy a member of a Christian church, it may speedily be rectified; or if you have in every respect thus adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour, you may give him the glory, and walk by the same rule.

The blessings accruing to the churches, and to every individual who properly attend to their duty, and by love and grace are thus actuated, we would now lay before you, did not the limits of this letter forbid; for surely they are great and numerous. But, in brief, the God of peace be with them; the peace of God in them; comfort, joy, and edification in the Holy Ghost; the ordinances and sabbath days pleasant and delightful; the Brethren happy; the wicked world silenced and confounded; religion and its professors honorable; in a word, who can harm you, if you be followers of that which is good, heaven would indeed, by these means, be begun below, this would be the land of Beulah, Isaiah lxii. 4. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another; this then we say, walk in the spirit, and ye shall in no wise fulfil the lust of the flesh, Gal. v. 15. 16.

Finally, Brethren, we commit and commend you to God and to the word of his grace; and to conclude, desire to comfort you with the prospect of meeting you e'er long in our father's kingdom; a few more trials and temptations and all will be right and well; then shall we know even as we are known, and need no stimulation as now, to love, praise, and adore, for *God shall be all, and in all.* We are, in great affection, your Brethren in Tribulation, in Patience, and in the Lord.

Signed on the Behalf of the Associations,

By THOMAS PURDY, MODERATOR.

B R E V I A T E S.

LEWES, 3d and 4th June, 1788.

TUESDAY afternoon, three o'clock, the Ministers and Messengers met, Brother *Purdy* began the solemnity by prayer. According to an agreement the last association, the names of the Ministers and Messengers were called over. Brother *Purdy* was chosen MODERATOR, who immediately read the preliminaries. On reading the letters from the several churches, we were much pleased to find that peace reigned universally; that in some of the churches there had been considerable increase; that they were all favoured with the means of grace; and that the work of God, in the conversion and edification of his people, was in a flourishing state. O what thankfulness should such mercies produce in our hearts! We, as Ministers, can join the Apostle, and say, *We live, if our people stand fast in the truth.* May Zion's prosperity be our chief joy, for they shall prosper that love her.

Our sister church at *Wivelsfield*, gave satisfactory reasons for their absence the two last years, and resumed their place in the association as formerly.

The church at *Brightelmstone* was received into the number of the associated churches.

The case of the church at *Slaugham* under the pastoral care of our Brother *Humphrey*, was presented by Brother *Middleton*, and it was agreed to recommend it to the Associated Churches, after the case at *Cranbrook* had been attended to.

Brother *Lloyd* having made some objection to the term *Moderator*, he was desired to draw up his sentiments on that subject, and submit them to the brethren at the next association. Adjourned.

Divine worship began at seven o'clock in the evening, Brother *Atwood* prayed; Brother *Copping* preached from 1 Cor. x. 33. and after singing suitable hymns, Brother *Humphrey* concluded in prayer.

WEDNESDAY morning met at six o'clock, the Brethren *Vine* and *Coe* prayed, Brother *Atwood* read the *Circular Letter*, which being approved, was ordered to be printed. Brother *Booker* prayed, and the Moderator concluded. Adjourned.

Divine worship began at ten o'clock, Brother *Vidler* prayed; Brother *Lloyd* preached from Gen. iv. 4, 5. Brother *Butcher* prayed; Brother *Atwood* preached from 2 Cor. iv. 7. and after suitable hymns were sung, Brother *Purdy* concluded in prayer.

Met again at four o'clock, Brother *Russel* prayed. It was agreed that the subject of the circular letter should be proposed the year preceding its publication. Brother *Copping* being appointed to draw up the next letter, one of the following questions was recommended to him as the subject: viz. First, *What is the essential difference between the Law and the*

the Gospel, and how are they to be distinguished in public preaching? Secondly, What is the Work of the Spirit of God upon the Heart of a Sinner?

Agreed to observe the first Wednesday in November next as a day of fasting and prayer.

Agreed to hold the next association at ASHFORD, in Kent, the first Tuesday and Wednesday in June, 1789; put up at the Oak; Brother Middleton and Brother Booker to preach; in case of failure Brother Russell and Brother Vidler. After enjoying the divine presence, and much harmony and brotherly love in all our meetings, the Assembly of Ministers and Messengers was dismissed very affectionately with prayer, by the Moderator.

The STATE of the ASSOCIATED CHURCHES, in 1788.

(WIVELSFIELD *excepted*)

Addition	}	Baptized	-	-	-	-	-	60
		Restored	-	-	-	-	-	2
								—62
Diminution	}	Dead	-	-	-	-	-	12
		Dismissed	-	-	-	-	-	1
		Excluded	-	-	-	-	-	8
								—21
								—
							Increase	- 41



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